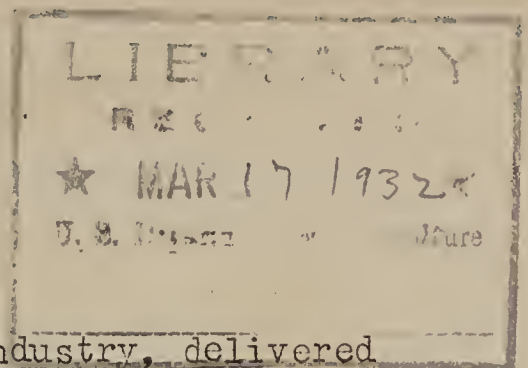


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THE GARDEN CALENDAR



A radio talk by W. R. Beattie, Bureau of Plant Industry, delivered in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour, over a network of 46 associate NBC radio stations, Tuesday, February 16, 1932.

Hello Folks.- A few days ago we received a letter written last Tuesday by a lady who lives on a rural route in Ohio and it is such a nice letter that I want to read you a part of it. She says, "May we please have a copy of the interview which we heard today over the radio during the Farm and Home Hour, concerning gardens and fertilizers? If you have a bulletin or a leaflet dealing with the different kinds of fertilizers and the "why" of each, will be glad to have it."

Needless to say we sent this lady a copy of the interview between Dr. Fletcher and myself and we also sent her a bulletin containing considerable information on the use of fertilizers for the various crops. Farmer's Bulletin No. 1673 on The Farm Garden gives information on the use of fertilizers in gardens and Leaflet 70 by the Bureau of Chemistry and Soils gives information on the home mixing of fertilizers and explains the part performed by the different elements.

In the brief time I have on the air today, I want to call your attention to the importance of securing disease-free seed potatoes for planting. Many of you folks who live in the South have already planted your early potatoes, and I trust that you used genuine certified seed. The presence of the Virus Diseases is largely responsible for the so-called "running out" of potatoes, and these diseases can be detected only by field inspection. Certification means that the seed so certified has been field-inspected, and that the presence of the seed-borne diseases has been reduced to a minimum.

After all, it is the increased yields obtained through the use of certified seed that has popularized it. The average of 11,627 reports from Canada and the United States shows a net increase of 46.4 bushels per acre in favor of certified seed as compared with common seed. Back in 1919, a little less than half a million bushels of certified seed potatoes were planted in this country. Last season, almost nine million bushels were planted. That shows what potato growers think of certified seed.

"For goodness sake," says somebody, "please stop talking about anything that will increase production. We've got more potatoes now than we can sell." Quite true, but -- and here is the nub of the whole question, for it has been found that the highest yields are almost invariably made at the lowest production cost per bushel. In one case where the yield was away up around 800 bushels to the acre the cost per bushel was only about 34 cents, and in cases where the yield was only about 90 or 100 bushels, the cost was as high as 80 or 90 cents.

Just a word now about certified seed potatoes and how they are obtained. To begin with State officials and growers of certified seed potatoes have spared no pains to get the best, disease-free seed to start with. In many cases they have gone to the trouble of selecting thousands, taking one eye out of each potato, and growing it to see if it is free from diseases. If it is they take the remaining eyes of that potato for seed stock. That's a lot of work and is called "tuber indexing." Then while the potatoes are growing in the field they are gone over several times, and every plant that shows any signs of disease is carefully dug up root and branch, and taken from the field.

It was soon found that insects such as leaf hoppers and aphids carried the virus diseases from one potato plant to another or from one potato field to another, and so drastic insect control became a part of potato seed certification. The potatoes are carefully inspected when they are dug and again later in the storage bin and if they stand up under all of this rigid examination and come through with a clean bill of health the coveted certification tag is attached to the bag of seed by the State inspectors. Now it happens that not all that bears the word "certified" is genuine. Here is another case of where you should "read the label" and read it carefully. "Certified potatoes" is a mark frequently placed on bags of potatoes intended for cooking purposes and may indicate that the contents of the bag are certified only as to grade.

Every bag of genuine certified seed potatoes bears the tag of the State inspection service of the State in which the seed was grown. This inspection is made by different agencies in the various States. In some cases it is under the direction of the State Experiment Station, in others the State Department of Agriculture or the Crop Improvement Board may make the inspections and issue the certificates. The purpose of it all is to safeguard the potato grower in the matter of securing disease-free seed potato regardless of whether he is planting a bushel of seed to grow potatoes for home use, or if he is planting potatoes on a large scale for the market. If everybody planted certified seed potatoes we would hear less about potatoes "running out."

Farmers Bulletin No. 1436 - "Why Potatoes Run Out."